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Ad Hoc Inter-Agency Task Force on Tobacco Control

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report responds to Economic and Social Council resolution 2004/62 requesting the Secretary-General to report to the Council at its substantive session of 2006 on progress made by the Ad Hoc Inter-Agency Task Force on Tobacco Control in the implementation of multisectoral collaboration on tobacco or health.

The report describes the social, economic and social concerns of tobacco use, then focuses on specific areas of concern for tobacco control where inter-agency collaboration can be important, including exposure to second-hand smoke, the link between tobacco and poverty, the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, the development of a protocol to curb illicit trade in tobacco products and the issue of corporate social responsibility of the tobacco industry.

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I. Origins of the Ad Hoc Inter-Agency Task Force on Tobacco Control and update on its mechanisms and activities

1. In its resolution 1993/79 of 30 July 1993, the Economic and Social Council requested the Secretary-General to establish, under the auspices of the World Health Organization (WHO) and within existing resources, a focal point among existing institutions of the United Nations system on the subject of multisectoral collaboration on the economic and social aspects of tobacco production and consumption, taking into particular account the serious health consequences of tobacco use. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) was given this responsibility. Between 1993 and 1998, the focal point submitted three reports to the Secretary-General at the substantive sessions of 1994, 1995 and 1997 of the Council (E/1994/83, E/1995/67 and Add.1 and E/1997/62).

2. In 1999, the Secretary-General agreed to the designation of an Ad Hoc Inter-Agency Task Force on Tobacco Control under the leadership of WHO, thereby replacing the focal point arrangement located at UNCTAD. The decision was taken in order to intensify a joint United Nations response and to strengthen global support for tobacco control. The establishment of the Task Force was endorsed by the Organizational Committee of the Administrative Committee on Coordination at its first regular session of 1999, held in Geneva on 12 and 13 April 1999 (ACC/1999/2, sect. VII).

3. In accordance with resolution 1999/56 adopted by the Council at its substantive session of July 1999 endorsing the establishment of the Task Force under WHO leadership, the Secretary-General reported to the Council at its substantive session of 2000 (E/2000/21) on progress made by the Task Force in the implementation of multisectoral collaboration on tobacco or health. A report was presented at the substantive sessions of 2002 and 2004. The present report responds to Council resolution 2004/62 requesting the Secretary-General to report to it on the work of the Task Force at its substantive session of 2006.

4. The members of the Task Force are the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat; the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); the International Civil Aviation Organization; the International Labour Organization (ILO); the International Monetary Fund (IMF); the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); UNCTAD; the United Nations Development Fund for Women; the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships (UNFIP); the United Nations International Drug Control Programme; the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); the World Bank; the World Customs Organization; WHO; the World Intellectual Property Organization; and the World Trade Organization.

5. Since its inception, the Task Force has met six times. The sixth session of the Task Force was held on 30 November and 1 December 2005 at the International Labour Office, Geneva. The meeting was co-hosted by ILO and WHO. Representatives of FAO, ILO, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UNESCO, UNEP, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNICEF, the World Customs Organization, WHO, the World Bank, the European Commission, the European Police Office (Europol) and the

European Anti-Fraud Office participated in the session. The subjects discussed included smoke-free workplaces, the illicit trade of tobacco products, the link between tobacco control and economic development, and preparations for the implementation of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. Participants also defined an outline and the principal themes for the structure of the fourth report to the Council.

II. Tobacco use: overview of public health, social and economic concerns[1]

6. Tobacco is the second cause of death in the world and the fourth most common risk factor for disease worldwide. It is the cause of 4.9 million deaths a year, which is equivalent to 1 in 10 adult deaths globally. The figures are even more alarming when considering that future projections estimate that the number will nearly double by 2020.

7. Almost 1.3 billion people currently smoke worldwide. More than 1 billion smokers are men and 231 million are women. Some 900 million smokers (that is, 84 per cent of all smokers) live in developing and transitional economy countries, while only about 16 per cent live in developed countries. If the global prevalence of tobacco use remains unchanged, it is projected that the total number of smokers will rise to more than 1.7 billion by 2025.

8. All tobacco products are harmful; there is no safe way of using them. The WHO World No Tobacco Day theme for 2006 is "Tobacco: deadly in any form or disguise". Unfortunately, accurate information on tobacco product ingredients, toxicants and health effects is scarce for many products. The purpose of the campaign is to help tobacco users and non-users obtain accurate information and reveal the true impact of all traditional, new and future tobacco products.

9. Given the current trends, the tobacco epidemic is expected to mostly affect poorer developing countries, which are already struggling to improve the living conditions of their populations.

10. The impact of tobacco use cannot be limited to tobacco users, given that its consumption creates negative external effects as well. Individuals exposed to the smoke of cigarette users face serious health risks. There is clear scientific evidence of an increased risk of lung cancer for non-smokers exposed to second-hand smoke, estimated at 20 per cent in women and 30 per cent in men who live with a smoker. It has also been shown that non-smokers who live with smokers have a 30 per cent greater risk of heart attack or death from heart disease.

11. Tobacco use also raises concerns as a development issue. Evidence from around the world shows that poorer individuals tend to smoke the most. For the poor, the money spent on tobacco represents a high opportunity cost; money spent on tobacco is money not spent on vital goods, such as food for the family, education and health care. Tobacco also contributes to the poverty of individuals and their families because tobacco users are more likely to suffer from disease and loss of both productivity and income (not to mention higher medical costs and death in the worst cases). Furthermore, tobacco farming and manufacturing can contribute in

[1] The reference list for the present report is available upon request to WHO.

some cases to the illness and poverty of the families involved in those activities. Tobacco and poverty form a vicious circle from which it is difficult to escape, unless tobacco users are encouraged and given the support necessary to quit.

12. Sound and strong tobacco control measures will effectively reduce consumption, which will in turn improve the health of populations and contribute to better economic development, in particular in developing countries. In the light of the above findings and arguments, the effective implementation of tobacco control, particularly through the Convention, is imperative.

III. Tobacco use and production: key areas of concern

A. Second-hand smoke and smoke-free workplaces

13. Second-hand smoke, often referred to as environmental tobacco smoke, is a mixture of the smoke from a smouldering cigarette (sidestream smoke) and the smoke exhaled by a smoker (mainstream smoke). Second-hand smoke contains over 250 carcinogenic or otherwise toxic substances. Passive smoking, also referred to as involuntary smoking, refers to the inhalation of smoke by non-smokers and smokers themselves. Exposure to second-hand smoke is common in most types of indoor locations, for example, homes, workplaces, public transpo: ation and public places. For adults residing with non-smokers, the workplace is usually the main location of exposure, while the home is typically the place of greatest exposure for children and non-working spouses (usually women).

14. Several epidemiological studies have concluded that exposure to second-hand smoke may cause serious and fatal diseases in non-smokers. Adverse health effects in children include low birth weight, fetal growth retardation and congenital abnormalities, at birth; post-natal health effects include respiratory problems, increased risk of sudden infant death syndrome (cot death), reduced physical development, increased cognition and behaviour problems and an increased risk of childhood cancers. Adverse health effects on adults include lung cancer and cancer of the oral/nasal cavity, breast cancer in young, primarily pre-menopausal women, coronary heart disease, respiratory illnesses and reduction of lung function. There is no safe level of exposure to second-hand smoke. Ventilation and air cleaning do not provide adequate protection from exposure to second-hand smoke indoors, despite claims to the contrary by the tobacco industry. The elimination of exposure to second-hand smoke through legislated smoke-free environments is the only scientifically supported solution for protection against its harmful effects.

15. In article 8 of the Convention — parties recognize that scientific evidence has unequivocally established that tobacco consumption and exposure to tobacco smoke cause death, disease and disability. Parties were thus called upon to provide protection from exposure to tobacco smoke in indoor workplaces, public transport, indoor public places and, as appropriate, other public places. In addition to improving the health of non-smokers, smoke-free environments are among the most cost-effective tobacco control policies. Evidence gathered from a systematic review showed that totally smoke-free workplaces were associated with a reduction in smoking prevalence of 3.8 per cent and decreased consumption by continuing smokers by up to 3.8 cigarettes per day. The combined effects of reduced prevalence and lower consumption corresponded to a relative reduction of 29 per cent in

cigarette consumption per employee. It is also probable that smoke-free environments reduce smoking initiation by changing societal attitudes to smoking and by reducing the number of cigarettes per day among smokers, which encourages quitting.

16. The WHO Tobacco Free Initiative, in collaboration with the Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health, organized an expert consultation on second-hand smoke and smoke-free environments from 1 to 3 November 2005 in Montevideo. The consultation focused on five key areas: second-hand smoke composition and health effects; the economic impact of involuntary smoking and of smoke-free legislation; the impact of smoke-free legislation on consumption; policy development, implementation and evaluation; and advocacy to promote smoke-free environments and counter tobacco industry opposition. Drawing on the discussions and outcomes of the consultation, WHO policy recommendations on second-hand smoke and smoke-free environments will be developed. The recommendations will address the scope and coverage of smoke-free policies, implementation experiences and guidelines, enforcement, evaluation and monitoring, available resources and capacity-building needs.

17. Preliminary recommendations from the consultation confirmed the scientific evidence that 100 per cent smoke-free environments were necessary to provide protection from the health effects of second-hand smoke. It is recommended that Governments aim to require that all indoor workplaces (including restaurants, bars and casinos) and public places be smoke-free. On the basis of the evidence showing that smoke-free environments do not harm businesses, including those in the hospitality sector, it is also recommended that Governments counter arguments that claim otherwise and implement smoke-free workplace policies in the hospitality sector. Experience from countries such as Ireland, Italy and Norway, which have successfully implemented a complete ban on smoking in all public places, are the best evidence that smoke-free environments are effective and do not harm businesses.

Second-hand smoke: an occupational hazard

18. Second-hand smoke is also considered an occupational hazard, namely a working condition that can lead to accidents, illness or death. There are a number of medical, hygienic and legal arguments for considering second-hand smoke at the workplace an occupational hazard.

19. Documented health effects of exposure to second-hand smoke at the workplace include cardiovascular diseases (hypertension and coronary heart disease), cancer, asthma and low birth weight. Studies conducted in the United States of America have shown that 4 to 7 per cent of deaths from coronary heart disease are caused by workplace exposure of non-smokers to second-hand smoke. Furthermore, second-hand smoke is recognized by the International Agency for Research on Cancer as a human carcinogen. Epidemiological evidence suggests that workplace exposure to second-hand smoke increases the risks of cancer by almost 20 per cent. Other evidence shows that exposure to second-hand smoke may lead to the exacerbation of already existing asthma. Furthermore, some cases of low birth weight have been attributed to workplace exposure to second-hand smoke.

20. Exposure to second-hand smoke can be assessed using direct methods measuring markers of smoke in the air of the workplace, or indirect methods relying

on mathematical modelling of different exposure scenarios. The pattern of exposure to second-hand smoke at the workplace is different from home exposure because it depends on the number of smokers on the work premises, its size, ventilation, smoking restrictions and other factors. There are effective methods to prevent exposure to second-hand smoke at the workplace. The most effective is the elimination of the risk at its source, namely the cessation of tobacco smoking or the introduction of a total ban on smoking at the workplace. Engineering controls, which for example create special smoking lounges equipped with ventilation and filters, are less effective. The organizational measures for reducing exposure to second-hand smoke include workplace policies, programmes and campaigns.

21. If second-hand smoke is considered an occupational hazard, its control should be based on legislation for occupational health and safety in addition to the legislation issued under the Convention. Occupational health and safety legislation requires the assessment of health and safety risks at the workplace, the implementation of preventive measures, providing information to and the participation of workers. Applying such legislation to second-hand smoke would require the development of specific rules for smoke control, involving labour inspection in the enforcement of such rules and the mobilization of occupational health services for tobacco control at the workplace.

22. The Safe Work department of the International Labour Office provides the training package "SOLVE", an interactive educational programme designed to assist in the development of policy and action to address psychosocial issues at the workplace. The programme considers stress, tobacco, alcohol and drugs, HIV/AIDS and violence as psychosocial problems which can lead, at the individual level, to a higher risk of accident, increased family or social problems, stigmatization and discrimination, poor health, physical or psychological illness, pain, distress, disability and death. At the organizational level, the consequences of untreated psychosocial problems are poor morale, increased absenteeism, high turnover rates, lower productivity, reduced profits or services, higher costs and reduced competitiveness. The programme can be used to address tobacco as a stressor or as a consequence of other psychosocial problems within a comprehensive programme to tackle psychosocial problems in the workplace. It comprises policy and shop floor level training, as well as a series of 1.5 hour interventions to address specific subject areas. All courses use exercises, group discussion and individual action planning to achieve their objectives. The programme focuses on prevention in translating concepts into policies and policies into action at the national and enterprise levels.

23. The headquarters of WHO is a smoke-free environment. While smoking has been restricted to specific areas of the headquarters since 1987, smoke-free policies at WHO were intensified in 2000 with smoking permitted only in two designated outdoor areas. Worker opinion was very favourable. In a survey of WHO employees conducted in 2005, 81.7 per cent of respondents "strongly agreed" that WHO should ensure a smoke-free environment. The situation is different, however, in the other agencies of the United Nations, in particular at Headquarters in New York.

24. In September 2003, the Secretary-General issued a bulletin (ST/SGB/2003/9) asking diplomats and staffers to refrain from smoking inside buildings at Headquarters "for the purpose of eliminating the risks associated with second-hand smoke for all those working on United Nations premises at Headquarters". Some diplomats refused to abide by the new policy, pointing out that although the

Secretary-General was the chief administrator of the United Nations, the power to issue mandates rested with the States Members of the General Assembly. As a consequence, the policy could be applied only to staff and not to delegates. A letter signed jointly by the Director General of WHO and the Executive Director of UNICEF was addressed in November 2005 to the Secretary-General asking him to consider strengthening the enforcement of the tobacco-free policy at the United Nations by implementing a ban of sales of tobacco products on United Nations premises and a complete smoking ban in all United Nations offices throughout the world. A response from the Under-Secretary-General for Management noted that management would explore ways to improve enforcement and introduce a complete ban in all United Nations offices throughout the world. He also noted that the sales of tobacco products were made by external vendors who had a contractual arrangement with the Organization. Consequently, the management would ask the Legal Counsel to review those arrangements to determine whether a ban on the sale of tobacco products was possible.

Follow-up actions

25. Legal precedents for public tobacco control are being set in Ireland, Italy, Malta and Norway, where widespread public smoking bans have been introduced by parliaments in recent years. Political consensus is moving towards effective tobacco control. The momentum for national bans has come from the occupational safety and health perspective. In the current climate, employers see support for smoking bans as a means of protection against potential legal action on unhealthy workplace environments. Protecting workers' health is the argument that is able to mobilize politicians to pass laws on smoking bans. At the same time, such laws would protect the health of large sections of the population and reduce public health-care costs. ILO, as the United Nations agency responsible for the world of work, is the natural home for international workplace action on smoking.

26. ILO has established structures and procedures for creating international legal documents; it is therefore logical that its existing capacity be used to pursue an issue that currently has important political implications. ILO codes of practice are part of its standard-setting instrumentarium. Codes of practice are non-binding but are often more widely used than other instruments, and can act as the basis for national laws. There is increasing awareness of the costs of second-hand smoke, in addition to the fact that some unions are beginning to spearhead developments in the area. Given that there is no ILO international standard relating directly to workplace smoking, the Task Force felt that the time had come for ILO to take a firmer stance and develop a non-binding code of practice on smoking in the workplace.

27. In line with the bulletin of the Secretary-General announcing a ban on smoking inside Headquarters buildings and the overwhelming evidence that tobacco is an occupational hazard in the workplace, the Task Force urges that the ban on smoking inside the United Nations be implemented. The Task Force recommends that the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly adopt a resolution on smoke-free workplaces at United Nations Headquarters and regional and country offices and also that the following actions be taken: (a) implementation of a smoke-free policy at the United Nations; (b) a ban on sales of tobacco products on United Nations premises; (c) encouragement of smoking bans in consultation with the staff; and (d) an approach to the issue from an occupational safety and health perspective.

28. A smoke-free policy should be implemented in order to protect staff. Consequently, no staff services should be provided where delegates smoke. Banning smoking in the workplace should be considered a right of employees to a safer work environment. The protection of the health of staff is not negotiable; the policy should be easily adopted and implemented by managers and other stakeholders. It is worth mentioning that, to date, 124 countries have become full contracting parties to the Convention and have accepted its measures, including the one on banning smoking in public places. Now that the Convention has become a globally implemented treaty, the Task Force feels the United Nations should set a high global example by making the United Nations premises smoke-free.

B. Tobacco, poverty and development

29. Tobacco is not solely a health issue; tobacco use and production also have an impact on the poverty of individuals and countries and on the environment.

30. The Millennium Development Goals derive from the United Nations Millennium Declaration which called on Member States to work together to eliminate extreme poverty, improve health and promote human development and sustainable economic growth in the poorest nations. The first goal addresses the direct elimination of poverty and hunger. The next six focus on specific conditions that reflect poverty and/or contribute to intergenerational poverty. The eighth goal proposes a means of addressing the first seven and calls on wealthy countries to work with developing countries to ensure their economic progress and sustainable economic development. The goals include specific targets to be reached by 2015 based on the prevailing situation in 1990.

31. The recent WHO publications *The Millennium Development Goals and Tobacco Control: An Opportunity for Global Partnership* and *Health and the Millennium Development Goals* establish a link between each of the eight goals and tobacco. The section below gives a quick overview of how that link can be established.

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. More than 80 per cent of smokers live in developing countries and transitional economies. At the country level, household surveys have shown that the prevalence of tobacco use was higher among low-income groups. For poor families, spending on tobacco consumption can represent a high opportunity cost, as it reduces their capacity to seek better nutrition, medical care and education. Studies undertaken in Indonesia, Myanmar and Nepal show that low-income households spend 5 to 15 per cent of their disposable income on tobacco. In addition, tobacco use leads to disease and death. Tobacco is the largest preventable cause of death and the fourth-highest risk factor for disease worldwide. The cost of treating tobacco-related diseases is very high and can fall heavily on the finances of countries and families. Strengthening tobacco control, which effectively leads to a decrease in consumption, is an important tool in reducing the costs associated with tobacco use and hence improves poverty alleviation, in particular among the poorest in developing countries.

Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education. Education is positively correlated with economic progress and better health. Money spent by the poor

on tobacco use is money diverted from education for children. In addition, children are employed in the farming and manufacturing of tobacco in different parts of the developing world.

Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women. Smoking is a predominantly male habit, especially in developing countries. Women are currently being targeted by the tobacco industry as marketing encourages those in developing countries to smoke as a sign of independence and success. Women are also exposed to second-hand smoke in their homes.

Goal 4: Reduce child mortality. Poor maternal health and nutrition is a major cause of infant mortality. Money spent on tobacco may contribute to infant malnutrition because scarce resources would be diverted from household expenditure on sound nutrition for children. In addition, second-hand smoke disproportionately affects children and increases respiratory and other ailments in infants and children.

Goal 5: Improve maternal health. Money spent on tobacco is money diverted from expenses on good food for mothers in poor families, which may contribute to malnutrition. Evidence also shows that women who use tobacco have smaller babies who are weaker and more likely to die.

Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. Smoking and exposure to second-hand smoke mostly affect those who are ill and whose immune systems are weak (such as those with HIV). It has also been shown, in particular, through an important study in India, that smoking causes subclinical tuberculosis to advance to clinical tuberculosis. The study in India also implicates smoking in half of all deaths by that disease.

Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability. The firewood used to cure and process tobacco increases deforestation (an estimated 200,000 hectares of forests and woodlands are cut down each year for tobacco farming). Tobacco growing also requires heavy use of pesticides, which can poison people, water and land. The heavy fertilizing of land in order to grow tobacco leads to soil degradation.

Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development. The global tobacco pandemic goes beyond national borders. Consequently, there is a need to address the problem from a global perspective. The Convention is an instrument designed to address tobacco control at the global level. However, international agencies and countries in the developed and developing world should also include tobacco control as a tool to address the Millennium Development Goals, and vice-versa.

32. Tobacco control can help in achieving the eight Millennium Development Goals. By helping tobacco users to quit and by discouraging young people to take up smoking, through strong tobacco control measures, the damage to health and the loss of basic income can both be substantially reduced, in turn leading to poverty alleviation and to better economic development in developing countries. This was already recognized by Member States of the Economic and Social Council when

they adopted resolution 2004/62 on tobacco control. The resolution specifically states that tobacco use not only has negative health, social and environmental consequences but that it also undermines efforts towards poverty alleviation, hence the importance of the enforcement of tobacco control measures through the Convention at the country level.

Follow-up actions

33. As currently defined, the Millennium Development Goals fail to address a number of important factors that contribute to sustainable development (such as tobacco control). Nonetheless, this should not prevent countries from integrating the missing factors in their national development programmes in the framework of implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. WHO, in collaboration with specialized development agencies, can play an important role in providing support to countries that wish to develop poverty reduction strategies that include tobacco control for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. In particular, input from UNDP, which is playing a central role in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals through its resident representatives, can be crucial in this area. In that regard, WHO will be planning three national workshops in the South-East Asia region to help promote the integration of tobacco control into national programmes for the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. Involvement of other agencies in the meetings, including UNDP, would be very helpful.

34. Work will also respond to the decision by the parties to the Convention, which during the first session of the Conference of the Parties strongly encourage all international and regional organizations to support activities related to tobacco control and to acknowledge its role in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, especially those related to poverty reduction, gender empowerment, reduction of child mortality, environmental sustainability and global partnerships for development.

C. World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control

35. The objective of the Convention, as highlighted in its article 3, is "to protect present and future generations from the devastating health, social, environmental and economic consequences of tobacco consumption and exposure to tobacco smoke by providing a framework of tobacco control measures to be implemented by the Parties at the national, regional and international levels". The Convention was developed in response to the globalization of the tobacco epidemic, which is exacerbated by a variety of complex factors with cross-border effects, including trade liberalization, foreign direct investment, global marketing, transnational tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship and the international movement of contraband and counterfeit cigarettes.

36. The Convention is an evidence-based treaty that includes demand and supply reduction provisions. The core demand reduction provisions are contained in articles 6 to 14, which detail the price, tax and non-price measures necessary to reduce the demand for tobacco. The non-price measures include provisions such as protection from exposure to tobacco smoke, regulation of the contents of tobacco products,

regulation of tobacco product disclosures, packaging and labelling of tobacco products, education, communication, training and public awareness and tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship bans. The core supply reduction provisions are contained in articles 15 to 17, and include actions against the illicit trade in tobacco products, ban of sales to and by minors and the provision of support for economically viable alternative activities. Another new feature of the Convention is the inclusion of a provision to address liability issues. Mechanisms for scientific and technical cooperation and exchange of information are set out in articles 20 to 22.

37. The Convention entered into force on 27 February 2005, 90 days after the treaty had been ratified (or its legal equivalent) by 40 States. On 3 November 2005, only two and a half years after its adoption, the treaty had already been joined by 100 countries, making it one of the most widely embraced treaties in United Nations history. As at 3 May 2006, there were 126 parties spanning the globe and all income groups and covering more than 70 per cent of the world's population. The 126 parties to the Convention account for more than 74 per cent of world tobacco leaf production, 62 per cent of world tobacco leaf export, 68 per cent of world cigarette production and 63 per cent of world cigarette exports.

First session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention

38. In accordance with article 23 of the Convention, the Conference of the Parties, the governing body of the Convention, was to be convened by WHO no later than one year after its entry into force. The first session of the Conference was held in Geneva from 6 to 17 February 2006. The agenda of the Conference included the adoption of the rules of procedure, the designation of the permanent secretariat, the adoption of its operating modalities and the budget for the period 2006-2007. Conference participants were also required to consider the study on existing sources and mechanisms of assistance prepared by the interim secretariat, recommend a template for reporting and suggest protocols and guidelines for implementing the treaty to be negotiated.

39. In compliance with article 26.5 (c) of the Convention, a study was commissioned to examine existing and potential sources of funding and technical assistance for tobacco control and implementation activities. In addition to such assistance from WHO, the study found that five other international organizations had stated that funding was or might be available: FAO, UNICEF, UNFIP, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the World Bank. The European Commission was also cited as a possible source. Nonetheless, a comprehensive system of tobacco control funding for target countries is still being developed. The international donor community needs to recognize that tobacco is a fundamental part of the Millennium Development Goals. It will be up to developing countries and countries with economies in transition to prioritize tobacco control within their country strategies to begin the necessary dialogue with donors.

40. The first Conference of the Parties decided:

(a) To establish a permanent secretariat of the Convention within WHO located in Geneva. Delegates agreed on a budget of $8 million for its operation over the next two years. Parties agreed to fund it through voluntary assessed contributions. The World Health Assembly will consider a resolution on the establishment of a permanent secretariat at its session in May 2006;

(b) To create working groups that would begin to develop protocols in the areas of cross-border advertising and illicit trade. Parties also agreed to develop guidelines to help countries establish smoke-free places and effective ways of regulating tobacco products;

(c) To assess progress made by countries in implementing the measures required by the Convention through a pilot reporting questionnaire agreed on by the Parties;

(d) To call upon developed countries to provide technical and financial support for tobacco control to developing countries and those with economies in transition and for recipient countries to give priority to tobacco control in discussions with donors;

(e) To establish an ad hoc group of experts that would study economically viable alternatives to tobacco growing and production, with a view to making recommendations on diversification initiatives for those countries whose economies depend heavily on tobacco production.

41. The implementation of comprehensive tobacco control policies at the country level, as stipulated in the Convention, is a priority. In particular, the recent decisions of the Conference require in many areas the expertise of the member agencies of the Task Force in order to help advance the implementation of the Convention. The principal areas of possible technical collaboration with WHO, as highlighted by the Task Force and in line with the provisions of the Convention are:

(a) *Employment in the farming and manufacturing sectors.* Technical collaboration among WHO, FAO and ILO would be beneficial on issues relevant to support for economically viable alternative activities for those employed in the tobacco sector who could be affected in the long term by a reduction in tobacco demand;

(b) *Smoke free policies in the United Nations system.* ILO has considerable experience in the promotion of healthy workplaces and is providing support for employers and employees to achieve smoke-free workplaces; its input could be valuable on this issue;

(c) *Children and youth.* Inter-agency collaboration, specifically with UNICEF and UNFPA, in order to raise the profile of tobacco control with a special emphasis on children and young people would be valuable;

(d) *Taxation of tobacco products.* Given their economic expertise and mandate, the World Bank and IMF could be key collaborators in helping countries to establish and implement effective evidence-based policies to reduce tobacco use;

(e) *Illicit trade in tobacco products.* The experience and work of the World Customs Organization would be constructive in this area;

(f) *Tobacco and poverty.* Tobacco use has an adverse effect on poverty particularly in low-income developing countries. In the light of the Millennium Development Goals, input from UNDP at the country level to reduce tobacco use and its burden on the poor could advance the fight against poverty;

(g) *Education, communication, training and public awareness.* Close collaboration between WHO and UNESCO at the country level would facilitate access to relevant educational and public awareness programmes;

(h) *Protection of the environment.* The promotion of environmentally friendly tobacco production and manufacturing process could be enhanced at the country level by collaboration between WHO and UNEP;

(i) *Trade and investment issues.* The implications for tobacco control of global trade liberalization have already been studied by WHO in collaboration with the World Trade Organization and the World Bank and need to be examined further.

Follow-up actions

42. The need for such collaboration was highlighted by the Conference, in particular in the area of taxation and, as stated above, in the area of viable economic alternatives.

43. With regard to taxation, the Conference decided, in the area of financial resources and mechanisms of assistance, to strongly encourage relevant international, regional and subregional organizations, international financial institutions and other partners in development to identify tobacco control as eligible for financial support, technical assistance and advice in the area of tax measures to reduce the demand for tobacco, which could be provided to developing country parties and parties with economies in transition, to help them meet their obligations related to the Convention.

44. As concerns viable economic alternatives, the Conference decided to establish an ad hoc study group on alternative crops open to interested parties to the Convention and to mandate the study group to work closely with competent international organizations, in particular FAO and the World Bank, and to cooperate in its work with the Task Force.

45. The Conference also decided to invite the Task Force to provide to the Conference, at its second session, a report on their activities and possible relevance to increasing accessibility to funding for tobacco control, and an outline of their work in intensifying the response of the United Nations to tobacco control.

46. Following the decisions of the Conference, the Director-General of WHO addressed a note verbale to the Secretary-General in March 2006 to inform him that the Conference:

- Invited the Secretary-General to provide a report to the Economic and Social Council, with the aim of the adoption of a resolution on tobacco control and related resource mobilization by the Council;
- Invited the Task Force to provide a report on its activities and possible relevance to increasing accessibility to funding for tobacco control, as well as an outline of its work in intensifying the United Nations response to tobacco control, to the Conference at its second session.

47. The expertise of each of the member agencies of the Task Force will be needed to build the technical capacity for countries to support and strengthen national tobacco control programmes.

D. Project on illicit trade in tobacco products

48. As mentioned above, one important decision of the Conference was the creation of a working group that would begin the development of a protocol in the area of illicit trade. The technical input of specialized agencies, such as the World Customs Organization, Europol and the European Anti-Fraud Office, based on their work and experience in the area of smuggling, could be of great significance during the development of the protocol.

49. The World Customs Organization, through its central, regional and national offices, collects information (such as number of seizures and quantities seized around the globe) for its database. Among its main activities, the Office assists its member countries in their daily risk assessments, intelligence work and training, and also prepares analytical reports on smuggling of different products, including tobacco. In 2005, it published customs and tobacco reports intended for officials only. The data from the reports are summarized in the paragraphs below.

50. Between 2003 and 2004, the seizure of smuggled tobacco products increased mainly in Eastern Europe and Asia and the Pacific, whereas it decreased in Western Europe and South America. The quantities seized increased in Eastern Europe, Asia and the Pacific and slightly in Western Europe, but decreased in other regions of the world. Globally, seizures of smoking tobacco increased fourfold between 2003 and 2004, while seizures of counterfeit cigarettes almost doubled between 2002 and 2004. Knowledge and surveillance of seized smuggled tobacco products can provide important insight for policymakers working in fighting the illicit trade in tobacco products.

51. The mission of Europol is to make a significant contribution to the law enforcement actions of the European Union in preventing and combating international crime, with particular emphasis on the criminal organizations involved. The analysis work file smoke project was launched in April 2005, combining customs authorities and police from some 26 European countries and the United States of America. Eurojust, the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative, the World Customs Organization, the European Anti-Fraud Office and the WHO have expressed their full support for the project. Its objectives are to create a centralized service to which investigation teams can contribute high-quality operational data from live investigations; to process and analyse data quickly and effectively to allow the dissemination of analytical reports describing the criminal networks involved in smuggling, counterfeiting and illegal manufacturing of cigarettes and other tobacco products in the European Union; to identify key individuals in criminal networks; and to reveal the modus operandi in each case so as to detect and subsequently deprive criminals of their illicit proceeds. Organized crime is particularly involved in tobacco fraud and expands into other areas from its tobacco revenues.

52. The role of the European Anti-Fraud Office is to protect the financial interests of the European Union against all fraud and irregularities affecting the revenue and expenditure of its budget. The smuggling of both genuine and counterfeit cigarettes into the European Union has led to significant budgetary losses for both the Union and its member States. In order to fight against such problems, the European Union and certain Member States signed an anti-contraband and anti-counterfeit agreement with Philip Morris International, a comprehensive anti-smuggling and anti-money-laundering system for Philip Morris products covering them before and after

distribution. It requires: (a) supplemental payments of up to 500 per cent of duties and taxes due on smuggled genuine Philip Morris cigarettes seized in the future; (b) compliance protocols to protect against smuggling and money-laundering; and (c) tracking and tracing protocols to assist law-enforcement authorities to prevent future smuggling. To date, the system has operated well. However, the European Anti-Fraud Office feels it is not enough to have an agreement with only one manufacturer; a more global solution is needed, at the European or world level. The Convention is a vehicle for progress in this regard. A protocol on tracking and tracing, based on provisions of the agreement with Philip Morris International, would be a major step. Based on their experience, the Office prepared a paper for WHO for the first session of the Conference of Parties describing the possibility of developing a protocol to establish an international tracking and tracing regime for cigarettes, which would fall under article 15 of the Convention, on illicit trade in tobacco products.

Follow-up actions

53. On the elaboration of protocols, the Conference requested the secretariat to invite each WHO region, in consultation with the parties from their region, to nominate up to four experts per region to prepare a template for a protocol on illicit trade, on the basis of article 15 of the Convention, taking into account the work of entities competent in the matter. Upon the elaboration of the protocol, the experts would be aided by the technical input of agencies such as the World Customs Organization, Europol, the European Anti-Fraud Office, the World Bank and IMF.

E. The tobacco industry and corporate social responsibility

54. For WHO, tobacco companies and social responsibility are an inherent contradiction. As tobacco companies seek to enhance their participation in the corporate social responsibility movement and develop additional activities throughout the world, care needs to be taken in order to avoid the impression of collaboration or partnerships with tobacco companies. While some of the activities of companies may seem laudable at first glance, the end goal of tobacco companies is to increase their sales and market share, which is incompatible with health, well-being and sustainable development. Tobacco, while legal, is unique in that it is a consumer product that when used as directed by the manufacturers causes death, disease and disability among consumers on a large scale. Corporate social responsibility activities should not minimize the impact of the product on mankind, the operations of tobacco companies are therefore incompatible with the principles of responsibility and of the Global Compact. Because the goals of health and development agencies and those of tobacco companies are mutually exclusive, no partnership or collaborative endeavours should be realized. Furthermore, the position of WHO is that the tobacco industry, along with weapons manufacturers, is excluded as a source of funding.

55. Through the Tobacco Free Initiative, WHO has been involved with the International Organization of Standardization in efforts to develop non-binding standards of social responsibility (ISO 26000). The stated goal of the initiative is to develop guiding principles with global relevance that would be useful to organizations worldwide in establishing, implementing, maintaining and improving the way they address social responsibility. WHO urges other United Nations

agencies to adopt its position, namely that health is an inherent human right, and the negative impact of a product on human health cannot be overlooked when developing criteria and standards of social responsibility. WHO also believes that the tobacco industry should not be allowed to use social responsibility programmes or strategies to promote their products or business in any way. The right to health should therefore appear as a basic human right in the principles section of the standard.

56. The Global Compact seeks to promote responsible corporate citizenship so that business can be part of the solution to the challenges of globalization. It aims to bring companies together with United Nations agencies, labour and civil society to support universal environmental and social principles. However, WHO is concerned that there are three tobacco companies listed in the Global Compact and that those companies use that fact to create an impression of association with the United Nations system, sending a misleading message that indicates the active support of the United Nations system for their social activities and, by extension, for their business. Two subsidiaries of British American Tobacco, Souza Cruz of Brazil and the Ceylon Tobacco Company of Sri Lanka, are listed as is Standard Commercial Tobacco of Malawi.

57. WHO is aware that the Global Compact does not actively approve or promote the activities of the companies included in their list; it also realizes that being listed does not mean that a company is socially responsible. However, there are concerns that that is how it would be perceived from the outside and that tobacco companies will take advantage of this misleading impression.

Follow-up actions

58. Different United Nations and other intergovernmental entities are not clear on how to draw the line on donations from the tobacco industry when seeking funding from donors for relief and other humanitarian activities. The Task Force therefore seeks guidance from the Global Compact on the issue, given its field of expertise. The Task Force recommends that the Economic and Social Council call upon the Global Compact to create a working group to examine the issue of investments and participation of tobacco companies and their affiliates in the Global Compact. The working group would discuss what role, if any, tobacco companies might have as partners or donors in the activities of United Nations and intergovernmental agencies.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

59. **The following recommendations are submitted to the Economic and Social Council:**

(a) **Second-hand smoke kills. It is an occupational hazard and has a variety of psychological and social aspects. There is no safe level of exposure to second-hand smoke, hence the need to strictly regulate it in order to protect the health of workers. In the light of the experience of countries and agencies that have successfully banned tobacco use in the workplace, the Task Force strongly recommends that a complete ban on smoking be implemented at all United Nations premises (headquarters, regional and country offices). The Task Force**

recommends that a resolution be adopted by the Council calling for the following actions to be taken:

(i) implementing of a smoke-free policy at the United Nations;

(ii) a banning of sales of tobacco products on United Nations premises;

(iii) negotiation of a smoking ban in consultation with staff;

(iv) an approach to the issue from an occupational safety and health perspective.

(b) Given the mandate of ILO and WHO to promote optimal working conditions and that labour unions, Governments and employers are becoming more aware of the problems caused by second-hand smoking and the need to address them, the Task Force recommends that ILO and WHO jointly develop a code of practice on smoking in the workplace.

(c) Based on the evidence linking tobacco use with poverty and development and following the decision by the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, which strongly encourages international and regional organizations to support activities related to tobacco control and to acknowledge its role in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, the Task Force recommends stronger inter-agency collaboration to help include tobacco control in the national development programmes of countries, particularly low-income countries. With a view to achieving this goal, the Task Force particularly encourages the involvement of specialized development agencies in the organization of national workshops, in collaboration with WHO, to support the countries that want to develop poverty reduction strategies, including tobacco control activities, for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

(d) Given the multisectoral aspect of tobacco control and the need to implement the Convention at the country level, collaboration with different intergovernmental agencies is needed in a number of areas. Following the decisions made by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention at its first session from 6 to 17 February 2006, the Task Force recommends:

(i) Collaboration with intergovernmental organizations and international financial institutions, such as IMF and the World Bank, to advise countries in the implementation of sound tax measures as an effective and cost-effective tobacco control measure to reduce tobacco use and increase Government revenues;

(ii) Collaboration with specialized agencies, such as FAO, to work with the ad hoc study group mandated by the Conference to explore economically viable alternatives for tobacco workers, growers and, as the case may be, individual sellers;

(iii) Collaboration between Task Force members to explore tobacco control activities in need of funding and ways to gain access to the funds needed. This work will be summarized in a report to be presented to the Conference at its second session, to be held in the first six months of 2007.

(e) At its first session, the Conference highlighted the need for the elaboration of a protocol on illicit trade in tobacco products. The Conference

decided that a working group should be established, including up to four experts nominated from each WHO region, to prepare a template for the protocol. The working group should take into account the work of entities competent in the matter. Given the scope of its work, the Task Force recommends the active input of entities such as the World Customs Organization, the European Anti-Fraud Office, Europol, IMF and the World Bank during the elaboration of the protocol.

(f) WHO is of the view that tobacco companies and corporate social responsibility are inherently contradictory, because promoting and selling a deadly product and activities irreconcilable with acting as a socially responsible industry. It is unfortunate that three tobacco companies are listed in the Global Compact, an initiative established with the aim of promoting responsible corporate citizenship. The concern is that those companies will take advantage of their position to promote their activities and their image as socially responsible corporations. In order to prevent situations where the tobacco industry can use its social activities to remodel its image and make it positive in order to gain markets, the Task Force calls on the Council to recommend that the Global Compact establish a working group that would examine the extent to which tobacco companies can invest and participate in socially responsible activities, in particular in relation with the work of the United Nations. The working group would bear in mind the contradiction between the tobacco industry and social activities, and use that as a base in their discussions regarding the role the tobacco industry would have as partners or donors in the activities of the United Nations and intergovernmental agencies.

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Information and Communication and Technologies Task Force

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the Economic and Social Council the fourth annual report of the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force, as requested in the report of the Secretary-General (E/2001/7) prepared as a follow-up to Council resolution 2000/29.

* E/2006/100.

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Fourth annual report of the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force

Summary

In its fourth year, the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force, through its core activities, working groups and regional nodes, made a substantive contribution to the preparations for the Tunis phase of the World Summit on the Information Society by sponsoring several regional meetings, organizing a series of global forums, producing several publications and participating actively in events organized by other stakeholders, organized three high-level round tables linking information and communication technology (ICT) with science and technology and the Millennium Development Goals, and provided substantial input to the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development through the working group on ICT indicators and Millennium Development Goals mapping. While the mandate of the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force expired at the end of 2005, the task of harnessing the potential of ICT for advancing development is not finished. The global alliance for ICT and development was recently approved by the Secretary-General, and its mission will be to facilitate and promote further integration of ICT with development activities, thus contributing to linking the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society with the broader United Nations development agenda.

The alliance will build on and advance the work of past initiatives such as the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force as well as the experience of the World Summit on the Information Society process in addressing core issues related to the role of information and communication technology in economic development and eradication of poverty and the realization of the Millennium Development Goals.

Contents

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	Introduction	1–2	4
II.	Current environment	3–13	4
III.	Role of the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force	14–18	6
IV.	Activities and accomplishments	19–74	7
	A. Meetings of the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force	21–27	8
	B. Science, technology and innovation round-table series	28–33	9
	C. Input to the World Summit on the Information Society preparatory process	34–36	10
	D. Contribution to the World Summit on the Information Society	37–59	11
	E. Contribution to the follow-up and implementation of the World Summit on the Information Society	60–67	16
	F. Other activities	68–74	17
V.	Assessment and the way forward	75–85	18
VI.	Conclusion	86–88	21

I. Introduction

1. The present report has been prepared in response to the mandate contained in Economic and Social Council resolution 2000/29 of 28 July 2000 and its decision 2001/210 of 13 March 2001 on the establishment of the United Nations Information and Communication Technologies Task Force.

2. The report covers the activities of the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force for the period from March to December 2005, when its mandate concluded. It provides an overview of the current environment, describes the role of the Task Force in promoting access to and application of information and communication technology for advancing the United Nations development goals and presents an outline of the major activities of the Task Force, an assessment of its effectiveness and a look into the future of ICT for development.

II. Current environment

3. The year 2005 will be remembered as a milestone for the international development community. The 2005 World Summit was followed closely by the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society. The former drew the attention of the world community to the significant work still needed to meet international development goals by 2015; the latter to the powerful enabling and facilitating potential of ICT to scale up activities to transform the Millennium Development Goals into achievements.

4. While the 2005 World Summit confirmed that some degree of progress was being made towards the attainment of the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration (see resolution 55/2), the call to overcome a business as usual attitude and actively adopt more innovative efforts and approaches reverberated throughout the development community.

5. The 19,000 people who attended the World Summit on the Information Society two months later hailed the concerted application of ICT — in its various forms, including computers, handheld devices, wired and wireless telephones, even radios and televisions — as a vital ingredient in humanity's ability to address development challenges, including poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation and discrimination against women.

6. These momentous Summits took place at a time when the external environment was relatively favourable to promoting social and economic development. Although terrorism, security, high oil prices and regional and national strife posed many challenges to Governments, markets and citizens alike, macroeconomic and political situations were largely stable. Some development-oriented processes, such as the Kyoto Protocol talks and the Doha trade negotiation process, may have failed to bring tangible progress in areas such as environmental sustainability and international trade, but in the field of ICT for development there is cause for optimism.

7. While the digital divide has a long way to go before it is bridged, over the past 25 years there has been a positive movement to connect the previously unconnected. There has been a significant increase in the number of individuals with access to telephones, with developing countries accounting for more than 60 per cent of the

world's telephone lines in 2005, most of the growth coming from mobile telephones, which now outnumber fixed ones. Even poor households have been able to benefit from telephone access through prepaid services and calling cards.

8. Furthermore, estimates indicate that worldwide Internet use more than quadrupled between 2000 and 2005. A significant proportion of this increase can be credited to new wireless technology and associated business models that have increased competition and accelerated the development of broadband infrastructure in rich and poor countries alike and have helped, in particular, to begin to connect the urban poor and rural communities with affordable yet commercially viable services.

9. Other forms of technology have contributed to higher levels of access and usage. Among many examples, computing power continues to increase thanks to a novel approach to microchip architecture. Devices continue to become smaller and integrate more functions while becoming more affordable. Powerful Internet search engines have succeeded in making the World Wide Web's vast repository of information and destinations manageable. Broadband capacity increases significantly the versatility and utility of Internet connections.

10. Despite progress in the diffusion of ICT and innovations in technology and services, gaps in access to ICT remain large. Inequality persists both among and within countries. Effective policymaking to redress these disparities is, in many cases, hampered by the limited availability of current data for most developing countries. Many Governments lack adequate tools to monitor, evaluate and guide investments in ICT and connectivity in underserved areas. While the need for measurable, comparable indicators to track progress and benchmark performance in building an information society has been recognized, agreement remains to be reached on which data should be compiled and benchmarked internationally and which organizations should be responsible for various indicators, such as on access, quality, affordability, efficiency and sustainability.

11. Due to the successful advocacy of the World Summit on the Information Society process and the information and communication technology for development community, it is increasingly accepted that when applied strategically ICT has the potential to increase growth in businesses of any size and in countries at any stage of development, thereby creating new sources of income and employment for the poor. ICT can reduce poverty by making a country's economy more efficient and globally competitive. In addition to reducing income inequality, such technology has the potential to improve health and education services, enhance social inclusion and promote more efficient, accountable, democratic government, especially when combined with freedom of information and expression.

12. This distinctive role in supporting sustainable poverty reduction is increasingly being recognized by the world's policymakers. A consensus is forming that it is crucial that ICT should move closer to the mainstream of development economics and policies, nationally, regionally and globally. However, movement in this respect has been slow. Among the biggest challenges to the integration and diffusion of ICT facing developing countries are insufficient policy and implementation capacity, opposition from vested interests and persistent obstacles to the adoption of ICT, such as slow, unreliable and expensive telecommunication services, limited incentives to change business models and operating structures, lack of trust and legal impediments.

13. It is understood that Governments have primary responsibility for the welfare of their citizens and must provide an enabling economic, political and social environment and, in particular, design and implement e-strategies to guide national development. Other stakeholders, however, have distinct responsibilities of equal importance to ensure that the benefits of ICT reach all women, men and children. As is reiterated throughout the World Summit on the Information Society documents, only through the international cooperation of Governments and the partnership of all stakeholders, will it be possible to succeed in our challenge of harnessing the potential of ICT as a tool, at the service of development, to promote the use of information and knowledge to achieve the internationally agreed development goals and objectives, including the Millennium Development Goals, as well as to address the national and local development priorities, thereby further improving the socio-economic development of all human beings.[2]

III. Role of the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force

14. Since its launch in 2001, the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force has employed a multi-stakeholder model to promote digital opportunities, in particular in the developing world. Its mandate was to help forge a strategic partnership between the United Nations system, government, private industry, civil society and other relevant stakeholders. Rather than trying to carve out an institutional niche, its members, regional networks and thematic working groups cooperated with other institutions, networks and initiatives to leverage financial and technical resources to create opportunities for more of the world's citizens, work collectively to broaden understanding with respect to what ICT can do to improve quality of life and stimulate tangible applications of such technology to development challenges. As the Task Force was maturing so, too, was the ICT development community, which coalesced around the two-phased World Summit on the Information Society process and has since made inroads into the broader development community.

15. The Task Force was not an operational, implementing or funding agency. Because of its inclusiveness, legitimacy and convening power, the Task Force was a unique body that provided a supportive venue for cross-sectoral dialogue on international norms and practices, advocacy, policy coherence and coordination, and performed a critical guiding role in advancing development initiatives. Through strong campaigning, the Task Force contributed successfully to linking ICT and the development agendas at the Geneva and Tunis phases of the World Summit on the Information Society and the 2005 World Summit and in streams of regional activity within and outside of the United Nations system. It spearheaded the discussion on how ICT can be leveraged to achieve the internationally agreed development goals. Besides sustaining and strengthening substantive debate on issues related to information and communication technology for development within the context of the World Summit on the Information Society and the follow-up to the Millennium Summit, the Task Force facilitated debate on the preparation of action-oriented strategies and policies.

16. In its four years, the Task Force consistently advocated the enabling and catalytic roles that ICT can play across the broad United Nations development

agenda. The Task Force showcased how ICT can have both direct effects — by expanding the reach, scope and impact of social development programmes, health services, education and training programmes and citizen participation — and an indirect impact — by, among other things, creating new economic opportunities that help lift individuals, communities and nations out of poverty.

17. Having worked in parallel with the World Summit on the Information Society process since its inception, the Task Force has made a tangible contribution to it. It organized a number of global forums and high-level round tables on key substantive issues, including Internet governance and financing of information and communication technology for development; brought together its members with other international development and ICT experts, policymakers and leading private sector and civil society representatives to push forward the information and communication technology for development agenda; and provided a platform for sharing experiences, exchanging views and identifying untapped opportunities, successful pilot projects and innovative development approaches. During the Geneva and Tunis phases of the Summit, the Task Force held several parallel events and participated in the information and communication technology for development platform and information and communication technology for all exhibition. Through its regional networks in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Arab States and Europe and Central Asia, the Task Force organized events around the developing world in order to bring regional perspectives to the World Summit on the Information Society and build capacity to help developing country representatives participate more effectively. Likewise, the Task Force's thematic working groups on ICT policy and governance, enabling environment, human resources development and capacity-building and ICT indicators and Millennium Development Goals mapping provided venues for practitioners, academics, donors and recipients to interact online and in person in support of the World Summit on the Information Society objectives.

18. Throughout its mandate, the Task Force also supported a number of successful initiatives independent of, but complementary to, the World Summit on the Information Society process that were implemented with various partner organizations, including the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships (UNFIP), the World Bank, regional development banks and several other organizations and initiatives. The Task Force has also collaborated closely with private sector partners, including Hewlett-Packard, Intel, Nokia and Siemens.

IV. Activities and accomplishments

19. Although its founding predated the World Summit on the Information Society process, the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force opted to align its work in a complementary manner in recognition of the Summit's potential to channel worldwide efforts on achieving the vision of the people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented information society described in the Declaration of Principles adopted at the Geneva phase of the Summit, as well as attaining the development goals enumerated by United Nations conferences and summits held during the 1990s and captured in the Millennium Declaration.

20. In 2005, the work of the Task Force continued to facilitate the goals of the World Summit on the Information Society by fostering an international dialogue on key issues through meetings, forums and round-table discussions; contributing to the preparation, execution, follow-up and implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society; spreading knowledge and generating synergies through its publication series; and building on and strengthening its other initiatives, including the support of global networks and partnerships on information and communication technology for development and collaboration with Governments, the private sector, civil society and United Nations agencies to effectively apply ICT to development challenges.

A. Meetings of the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force

21. The Information and Communication Technologies Task Force convened three meetings in 2005: in April in Dublin, October in Geneva and November in Tunis.

22. A global forum on a multi-stakeholder approach to harnessing the potential of information and communication technologies for education was held in Dublin on 13 and 14 April 2005,[3] in conjunction with the eighth meeting of the Task Force, and was hosted by the Government of Ireland in collaboration with the Global e-Schools and Communities Initiative, a spin-off of the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force. The Forum attracted the participation of over 300 representatives, including ministers and other high-level Government officials, prominent educators and representatives of civil society, the private sector, academia and youth.

23. The Forum permitted a genuine dialogue focusing on opportunities to achieve a reduction of poverty and enhance development, by promoting the cognitive, creative and technological skills necessary to master digital technology in productive ways and by using technology to enhance learning experiences and overcome resource constraints and other barriers that prevent students from acquiring an education. Youth representatives stressed the need for youth inclusion in policymaking and underlined the importance of intergenerational dialogue. The roles of both ICT and education in increasing the likelihood for success in attaining the Goals by 2015 were highlighted.

24. The publication *Harnessing the Potential of ICT for Education: A Multistakeholder Approach — Proceedings of the Dublin Global Forum of the United Nations ICT Task Force*[4] captures innovative ideas and initiatives on the use of ICT in strengthening education and highlights the roles of all relevant stakeholders. It also features case studies of ICT-based projects at the grass-roots level and efforts to create national infrastructures that make use of new technology to improve teaching and learning habits. The publication was a product of collaboration between the Task Force and the Global e-Schools and Communities Initiative.

25. The closed session of the eighth meeting of the Task Force was held on 15 April.[5] The Task Force discussed its contribution to the World Summit on the Information Society and its activities related to the 2005 World Summit, reviewed the budget and debated the global alliance proposal (see para. 83). The session was preceded by meetings of the working groups on ICT policy and governance,

enabling environment, human development and capacity-building and ICT indicators and Millennium Development Goal mapping.

26. The ninth meeting of the Task Force, hosted by the International Labour Organization, was held on 1 October 2005 in Geneva, immediately following the conclusion of the third meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the Tunis phase of the World Summit on the Information Society.[6] Members discussed the results of the 13 September 2005 round table on innovation and investment: scaling science and technology to meet the Millennium Development Goals (see para. 29), the outcome of the third meeting of the Preparatory Committee of the Summit, the Task Force's contributions to the Tunis phase and the global alliance proposal in light of developments since the Dublin Task Force meeting.

27. The tenth meeting of the Task Force was held in Tunis on 18 November 2005, in conjunction with the World Summit on the Information Society. The Chairman of the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force reflected on its work and achievements and outlined the outcome of the Tunis phase of the Summit as it relates to the work of the United Nations in the information and communication technology for development arena. Members evaluated the activities of the Task Force, the status of the global alliance proposal and the implications of the creation of the Internet Governance Forum pursuant to the World Summit on the Information Society Tunis Agenda. Speakers praised the valuable work done by the Task Force, expressed appreciation to the staff of the Task Force secretariat, underscored the importance of strengthening multi-stakeholder engagement and expressed hope that the global alliance would continue the important work in information and communication technology for development.

B. Science, technology and innovation round-table series

28. With the 2005 World Summit and the Tunis phase of the World Summit on the Information Society both occurring in the latter half of 2005, the Task Force leveraged the unique opportunity to further strengthen the linkages between ICT and the internationally agreed development goals and to strategically align the outcomes of these two events, including by organizing three high-level round tables.

29. The round table on science, technology and innovation, including ICT, to meet the Millennium Development Goals, organized in partnership with AIT Global, was held on 30 June 2005 in New York and attended by representatives of numerous Member States, the United Nations system, the private sector and civil society. The round table on innovation and investment: scaling science and technology to meet the Millennium Development Goals was held on the eve of the 2005 Millennium Summit on 13 September 2005 at Headquarters.[7] This event was organized by the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force and the United Nations Millennium Project in association with UNFIP and was hosted by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Heads of State or Government from the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jordan, Malaysia, Pakistan and Senegal and dozens of leading information and communication technology for development experts, prominent members of the private sector and civil society and executive heads from the United Nations spoke. The round table on putting information and communication technologies to work for the United Nations development agenda and the Millennium Development Goals, an official parallel event of the World Summit on

the Information Society held on 17 November 2005 in Tunis, was organized by the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force in association with UNFIP and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and featured high-level representatives from government, industry, academia and the United Nations system, who focused mainly on Africa's unique challenges and opportunities.

30. The round tables launched a new phase of efforts aimed at marshalling multi-stakeholder contributions in science, technology, innovation and information and communication technology for development and finding ways for global partnerships to continue to advance progress on the United Nations development agenda. The free-flowing, moderated format facilitated interactive discussion.

31. Several key messages emerged as scientists, development experts, policymakers, business executives and ICT experts came together to share observations and ideas. The round tables reiterated how science-based technological advance is the long-term driving force of development and economic growth, and affirmed that building scientific capacity and investing in technological opportunities should be integral parts of national development strategies. Scaling up of development activities through ICT in health, education, economic growth and the environment might require providing evidence to policymakers that successful ICT-based initiatives can bring about a broader impact and new levels of reach and effectiveness in developing countries.

32. National Governments must take the lead and work to produce a favourable environment by supporting infrastructure development, integrating science and technology into national curricula, promoting national research systems, supporting innovation and enterprise and mainstreaming information and communication technology for development. Leaders must mobilize resources and commitment from all sectors and actively engage all segments of society in order to achieve the common goals of development.

33. Participants underscored the pivotal role of the private sector as a source of new initiatives and investments in ICT. They encouraged Governments to instil a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship within higher education systems in developed and developing countries. Some speakers highlighted the need to increase the participation of women and girls in science, technology and innovation and to find local solutions and foster regional cooperation.

C. Input to the World Summit on the Information Society preparatory process

34. The World Summit on the Information Society developed into a unique opportunity for world leaders to agree to shape the future information society in which the potential of the ICT revolution is harnessed for the advancement of development.

35. In 2004 and 2005, the Task Force made a substantive contribution to the preparations for the Tunis phase of the Summit, sponsoring several regional meetings, organizing a series of global forums and participating actively in events organized by other stakeholders. It also tapped its extensive network to involve

other stakeholders from the private sector and civil society in the preparatory process.

36. At the regional level, the Task Force partnered with the Economic Commission for Africa and others to support broad participation in the Africa regional preparatory conference in Accra in February 2005. Members also actively participated in the regional preparatory ministerial conference for Latin America and the Caribbean in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 2005. Through the plan of action for the information society in Latin America and the Caribbean, participants identified a set of goals and specific actions they committed themselves to achieving by 2007, in order to foster digital inclusion in the region, thereby providing a benchmark against which to measure progress in attaining the Summit's objectives.

D. Contribution to the World Summit on the Information Society

37. The Information and Communication Technologies Task Force contribution to the World Summit on the Information Society Tunis meeting included a presence in the exhibition, a number of substantive side events and the launch of several policy publications. Many Task Force members were featured prominently throughout the event hosting activities, delivering statements to the plenary, expanding and strengthening their networks and finding new venues for collaboration.

1. Exhibition at the information and communication technology for all event

38. The Task Force's exhibition included information on all its activities and served as a distribution point for its publications. The Task Force pavilion also showcased the Global e-Schools and Communities Initiative, the Fundación Cisneros initiative for televised education in Latin America, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey on ICT and parliaments, a project of the Division for Public Administration and Development Management and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs portal for accessing resources on gender issues on the Internet ("WomenWatch", http://www.un.org/womenwatch/) founded by the Division for the Advancement of Women.

2. Official side events

39. The Information and Communication Technologies Task Force organized parallel events during the Summit. These events showcased a wide range of ICT-related issues and provided a platform for discussion among stakeholders. They presented opportunities to bring together long-time collaborators and engage new actors in the work of the Task Force (see para. 29).

Measuring the information society

40. The event on measuring the information society brought together ICT stakeholders at the national, regional and international levels to highlight the importance of quantitative analysis for ICT policymaking and development in areas such as education, government and health to illustrate the contribution of ICT measurement to the follow-up of the World Summit on the Information Society, and to present a set of core statistical indicators agreed by key international agencies working in the field. The event was organized by the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development, which involves 11 organizations: the Information and

Communication Technologies Task Force, UNCTAD, Eurostat, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Institute for Statistics of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Economic Commission for Africa, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and the World Bank. The Partnership aims to promote the advancement of comparable ICT data at the global level and to assist developing countries in the collection of ICT statistics.

Governance, global citizenship and technology

41. The high-level dialogue on governance, global citizenship and technology: the role of parliaments in the information society, organized by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in cooperation with the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force, provided the opportunity to present the audience with key parliament leaders' views and crucial initiatives on the role that national and regional assemblies can play in building the information society.[x] The event provided the platform to launch the Global Centre for Information and Communication Technologies in Parliament, an alliance of national and regional assemblies, bilateral and multilateral agencies, international organizations, media, corporations and civil society that seeks to contribute to the empowerment of legislatures by reinforcing the capacity of parliaments to harness ICT tools and place them at the service of the institutional process, citizens' access to parliamentary activities and inter-parliamentary cooperation.

Choosing the right technologies for education

42. In the workshop "Choosing the right technologies for education", the Global e-Schools and Communities Initiative presented its total cost of ownership calculator, an online tool for policymakers and practitioners to understand and estimate the costs and benefits of various technology options for ICT in education.[y] The calculator is part of a project whose goals are to provide decision makers and educators, in both developed and developing countries, with accessible tools for understanding the value of investments in technology for education, for understanding the relative strengths and feasibility of different technology options and for taking local country conditions into account in the decision-making process.

Women in the information society

43. Addressing the lessons learned and experiences gained by each region in its gender-mainstreaming efforts, the round table on women in the information society: building a gender-balanced, knowledge-based economy organized by the regional commissions, UNCTAD and the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force, recognized the need to sensitize policymakers to the need to build an inclusive information society, promoting the full and active participation of women and men. The panel observed that gender issues were not adequately addressed in the Tunis Agenda and suggested directions for further action to empower women and increase their access to ICT. Youth education, culturally sensitive policies and poor and rural areas were particularly identified as areas of focus, where women's empowerment and increased access to ICT could help reduce gender imbalance. The panel also called for gender-sensitization training of policymakers to ensure better

policies, implementation of the World Summit on the Information Society Plan of Action and gender mainstreaming, with a view to achieving the larger goals of equity and equality.

Building regional partnerships for the information society

44. The regional commissions and UNCTAD, in cooperation with the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force, organized a high-level round table on building regional partnerships for the information society: regional perspectives and global dimensions, chaired by the President of Rwanda, to show how the goals of sustainable, inclusive development in the regions can be supported by innovative technologies. Led by a high-level panel of Government, private sector and international organization representatives, the round table highlighted the importance of regional cooperation and strengthened public-private partnerships in developing sustainable information strategies. The round table stressed that, as a prerequisite to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, access to ICT is a necessity and not a choice for developing countries. Recognizing the challenges they face in harnessing ICT to promote the development agenda, the regional commissions showcased successful initiatives that could be replicated in other areas.

Achieving better quality and cost efficiency in health care and education through information and communication technology

45. The panel discussion on achieving better quality and cost efficiency in health care and education through ICT, co-organized by Siemens and the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force, aimed to raise awareness of the potential of ICT to improve the quality and cost efficiency of vital public services, with a specific focus on education and health care. Panellists presented several concrete, replicable projects with quantifiable results and delivered some visionary statements.

Bridging the digital divide with broadband wireless Internet

46. In the framework of their partnership to promote the adoption of broadband wireless Internet in municipalities and underserved communities around the world, the Wireless Internet Institute and the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force organized a round table to explore the critical role that broadband wireless infrastructure deployments play in bridging the digital divide. The round table, based on the work undertaken over the last two years by the Institute in cooperation with the Task Force (see para. 54), identified best regulatory practices in establishing affordable service, early broad deployment case studies and lessons learned.

3. New publications presented at the World Summit on the Information Society

47. The Information and Communication Technologies Task Force presented seven new publications during the Tunis event.

The World Summit on the Information Society: Moving from the Past into the Future

48. This publication is a collection of more than 50 diverse perspectives from key players who participated in the making of the Declaration of Principles and the Plan

of Action, adopted during the Geneva phase of the World Summit on the Information Society in December 2003.[10]

49. The book analyses the Summit process from the perspective of intergovernmental organizations, Governments, the private sector and civil society, goes through the substantive issues of the Summit, such as history and theory, development, financing and capacity-building, human rights, media freedoms, cultural diversity, intellectual property and Internet governance, and looks into the future, towards the Tunis Summit and beyond.

Village Phone Replication Manual

50. The Manual was published in collaboration with Grameen Foundation USA and the World Bank.[11] It addresses the challenges of extending communication networks to rural areas in developing countries and serves as a guideline for replicating in other countries the village phone programme of Bangladesh, one of the most visible success stories in international development. This publication provides a template for creating sustainable initiatives that simultaneously bring telecommunications to the rural poor, create viable new business for micro-entrepreneurs and expand the customer base of telecommunication companies in a profitable way.

Information and Communication Technology for Peace: The Role of ICT in Preventing, Responding to and Recovering from Conflict

51. This report was published in collaboration with the Government of Switzerland and is an introduction to the ICT for Peace Project.[12] It is a preliminary attempt to address ways in which ICT can be used to defuse situations leading to conflict, manage peace operations, respond to the consequences of conflict and promote stabilization of post-conflict situations.

52. The first part of the report reviews the origin of ICT for peace in the World Summit on the Information Society and the role that ICT might play in the broader field of conflict management. The second part showcases many examples of how ICT is being used before, during and after conflicts. This publication highlights both the challenges and opportunities for development in ICT for peace, with the aim of raising awareness and building coherence in this important nascent sphere of activity.

Reforming Internet Governance: Perspectives from the Working Group on Internet Governance

53. At the Geneva phase of the World Summit on the Information Society, Governments adopted a Plan of Action that called on the Secretary-General of the United Nations to set up a Working Group on Internet Governance, to which 40 individuals from governments, the private sector and civil society were appointed. This publication is a collection of papers by former members of the Working Group and its secretariat that were written following the release of the Working Group's report in July 2005.[13] The contributors offer their personal reflections on the value of multi-stakeholder cooperation in the Working Group and beyond, and on key substantive issues and institutional reform proposals currently under consideration by the world community.

The Promise of Broadband Wireless Communities

54. This publication, in its second edition, captures and summarizes the work that the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force and the Wireless Internet Institute have been conducting since 2002 on the critical role that broadband wireless infrastructure deployment plays in bridging the digital divide.[14]

55. Led by the Institute and the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force, and with the financial support of more than 30 private sector organizations, the programme was conducted through a set of meetings and publications designed to raise awareness, build consensus, share best practices, train regulators and explore sustainable business models. It has triggered several landmark initiatives, including the acceleration of liberalization of unlicensed spectrum policy in South Africa, the Wireless Corridor in the State of Rio de Janeiro, Wireless Philadelphia and the statewide deployment of a broadband wireless infrastructure in the rural state of Jigawa in Nigeria.

56. The book attempts to clarify the key issues in wireless Internet technology that need attention on the part of Governments, international development agencies and non-governmental organizations in many challenges associated with legacy regulations, administrative obstacles and the opposition of incumbent telecommunication operators.

Open Access for Africa — Challenges, Recommendations and Examples

57. This publication builds on the workshop[15] on open Access held in Maputo on 10 and 11 May 2005, which was organized by the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force Working Group on the Enabling Environment in partnership with Canada's International Development Research Centre, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, the Eduardo Mondlane University and the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm. The main themes of the workshop were open access solutions, a pan-African optical fibre backbone, financing models and regulatory environment for open-access technology. The 150 participants from Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and North America addressed open-access technology in the context of developing regions, in particular sub-Saharan Africa.

58. The publication[16] examines the different aspects of how to provide increased availability of ICT infrastructure and services for Africa, including identifying the appropriate actors, adopting the relevant technologies and putting in place appropriate regulatory frameworks, and how to support the entrepreneurship necessary to build sustainable ICT networks in Africa.

WSIS and the Future of ICT

59. This magazine, a contribution to the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society, provides an introduction to the key issues of ICT, globalization and development and the complex undertaking of the World Summit on the Information Society and presents an overview of some of the challenges ahead. The contributions to the magazine reflect the successful multi-stakeholder approach of the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force, providing insights of representatives from Governments, academia, the private sector, civil society and international organizations.

E. Contribution to the follow-up and implementation of the World Summit on the Information Society

60. Responsibility for the follow-up of the World Summit on the Information Society is extremely broad, falling to all stakeholders. The United Nations has a pivotal role and a broad mandate in the follow-up and implementation of the Summit. While the mandate of the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force expired at the end of 2005, work begun under its leadership will persist and contribute to realizing the World Summit on the Information Society vision and moving forward, as highlighted below.

61. Furthermore, the Economic and Social Council has been mandated by the General Assembly to oversee the system-wide follow-up to the Geneva and Tunis outcomes and to review, at its substantive session in July 2006, the mandate, composition and agenda of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development. As regards multi-stakeholder implementation, a comprehensive and coherent framework for system-wide follow up has been developed and endorsed by the High-level Committee on Programmes with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), ITU and other relevant agencies of the United Nations system having responsibility to facilitate this work.

1. Development Account project on capacity-building for ICT policymaking

62. In 2005, the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force worked to achieve synergy of its activities with those of the Development Account project on capacity-building for ICT policymaking being implemented by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in collaboration with the regional commissions, UNDP and UNCTAD. The project aimed at raising awareness of, and building lasting capacities in, developing countries and countries with economies in transition on developing comprehensive and sustainable ICT for development policies and national strategies.

63. Funded under the fourth tranche of the United Nations Development Account, the project provides training, technical assistance and advisory services to decision makers and policymakers from developing countries. It builds on the ICT initiatives of the regional commissions and organizes a series of regional activities, including studies of the ICT strategies of developing countries, regional and online workshops and technical assistance in developing ICT policy and strategy to selected developing countries. Additionally, the project aims to establish a network of ICT actors and policymakers who will facilitate regional and international cooperation in the area of Information and Communication Technologies for Development.

64. The project also promotes systematic and effective participation of developing countries in international ICT agenda-setting by supporting the participation of policymakers from these countries in regional and international conferences and meetings on ICT policy.

2. Global alliance consultations

65. At the request of the Secretary-General, the Chairman of the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force led a broad, year-and-a-half long consultation process among Task Force members and the larger ICT for

development community to gather stakeholders' views on the proposed establishment of a global alliance on ICT and development. The alliance would respond to the need for an inclusive global forum and platform for multi-stakeholder, cross-sectoral policy dialogue, conducted in an open and transparent manner, on the use of ICT for enhancing the achievement of internationally agreed development goals.

66. The Task Force took advantage of meetings organized by itself and its partners to gather stakeholder views. This process included regional events conducted by the Economic Commission for Africa, the Arab Regional Network and the Asia Regional Network; a gathering in Paris for the business sector hosted by the International Chamber of Commerce; and a consultation in Geneva for civil society and Governments. In addition, online consultations took place via the Task Force's website and mailing lists on an ongoing basis. The resulting principles and elements of the global alliance were progressively refined, based on the continuous feedback.

67. Building on the work begun by and the experiences learned from the Task Force and its predecessors, the global alliance promises to be the next generation Information and Communication Technologies for Development multi-stakeholder entity, equipped to leverage the strengths of its partners and collaborators to make attaining the internationally agreed development goals a reality (see para. 83).

F. Other activities

68. Throughout 2005, the Task Force continued to support a number of activities initiated in previous years.

1. Contribution to the development of an information and communication technologies strategy for the United Nations system

69. In order to take advantage of the unprecedented opportunities that ICT offers for system-wide knowledge creation and management, the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force undertook a collaborative effort with the information technology managers network of the United Nations system, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 57/295, which mandated the development of a comprehensive ICT strategy for the United Nations system. Task Force members have participated in periodic meetings and have prepared a number of papers containing expert advice and recommendations. The process of formulating actions and deliverables continues.

2. The World Trade Organization, e-commerce and information technology

70. In 2005, in collaboration with the Markle Foundation, the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force published a report on an entity with an important and under-recognized impact on the governance of information technology, the World Trade Organization, and its relationship to Internet governance.[17] Through its application of the rules-based trading system to e-commerce, the role of the Organization as a key player in information technology governance can be traced back to 1995 and has continued through the most recent Doha round of consultations. The report is a contribution to a wider discussion on an area of the work of the Organization that is of particular relevance to the future and to the Internet and aims to stimulate further understanding of the Organization's

role in Internet governance and lead to a more efficient, and ultimately more equitable, system of governance for existing and emerging technologies that will underpin and drive much of the global economy.

3. City informatization in the Asian and Pacific region

71. The fifth annual Forum on City Informatization in the Asia-Pacific Region was held on 30 May 2005 in Shanghai, China.[18] The Forum was initiated by the Shanghai Municipal People's Government and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and was co-sponsored by the Asia Regional Network of the Task Force, in collaboration with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, UNITAR, the State Council Informatization Office of China, the Ministry of Science and Technology of China and the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

72. The 2005 Forum was dedicated to the theme of ICT for development and provided opportunities for an in-depth discussion and a wide exchange of views on the challenges of bridging the digital divide within communities and on how to ensure access to the benefits of ICT for all citizens in the Asian and Pacific region. About 1,100 representatives from 44 countries attended the meeting, along with representatives of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and a wide array of civil society organizations.

4. International Council for Caring Communities

73. In 2005, the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force continued its multi-year partnership with the International Council for Caring Communities. Along with the United Nations Programme on Ageing, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Department of Public Information and private sector partners, the Task Force co-sponsored a worldwide student design competition on ICT and ageing, organized by the International Council for Caring Communities, to stimulate research and design projects related to the mainstreaming of older persons in the knowledge society and to demonstrate the value of ICT in the context of an ageing population.

74. On 9 June 2005, the International Council for Caring Communities organized a conference on the theme of "promoting an enabling environment: music, technology, culture and health care" held at Headquarters. The conference was planned in collaboration with the programme on ageing of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force, the Rusk Institute of Rehabilitation Medicine at New York University and the Global Music Healing Institute. Topics included ICT as an enabling tool for rural and urban delivery of health-care services, emerging technologies in music and medicine, the power of music in creating a dialogue among children and the impact of musical rhythms and their utilization as a medical tool.

V. Assessment and the way forward: Information and Communication Technologies for Development and the United Nations development agenda

75. The achievements and challenges of the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force over its four-year mandate were extensively discussed

during Task Force meetings and by its members, with a view to evaluating its impact and success in meeting its objectives and to provide an indication of how opportunities and threats present in the current environment might shape future endeavours and initiatives in Information and Communication Technologies for Development.

76. It was agreed that the Task Force had been successful in achieving its key objectives. It met a clear and widely recognized need for a truly global policy forum and platform for multi-stakeholder interaction and consensus-building on ways and means to harness the potential of ICT for servicing and advancing development.

77. The participation by Governments, civil society and private sector in Task Force activities has grown steadily and suggests that a base of concerned and engaged organizations has formed and responds to a concrete need. The special patronage of the Secretary-General, the direct link to the Economic and Social Council and other key United Nations agencies and bodies provided the Task Force with global visibility and, therefore, attracted high-level and expert participation from all stakeholders. The decentralized structure of thematic working groups and regional nodes achieved a broad geographical and institutional interaction and provided an impartial platform for the presentation of regional and subregional views, perspectives and concerns from all constituencies. There is general consensus that the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force was a real and fruitful step to expanding the reach, scope and impact on development by meaningfully engaging a variety of relevant stakeholders in an evenly balanced manner. Additionally, the diversity of views represented in the Task Force, as well as non-involvement in operational activities and funding, contributed to the perception of the Task Force as a neutral, honest broker.

78. Some of its achievements have been highlighted. The Task Force has been able to influence policy dialogue, both in intergovernmental forums and among various stakeholders and has enriched intergovernmental negotiations. The Task Force has had success in its activities to benchmark progress in the use of Information and Communication Technologies for Development by creating a non-confrontational, non-negotiating and open platform that promoted cross-sectoral dialogues on key policy concerns and issues. Tangible products that have emerged from the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force include a 12-book publication series on relevant Information and Communication Technologies for Development issues that have been key to meeting its objectives to raise awareness and build capacity among members of the development community, as well as policymakers and decision makers. Among the successes of the Task Force were: three well-attended thematic global forums; three high-level round tables linking ICT with science and technology and the Millennium Development Goals; a substantial input to the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development through the working group on ICT indicators and Millennium Development Goals mapping; and the successful spin-off of the Global e-Schools and Communities Initiative. In this last year of its mandate, the Task Force continued to provide advice to the Secretary-General on the United Nations ICT strategy and on the effective integration of ICT into United Nations management and planning in the broader context of the 2005 World Summit and United Nations reform.

79. The Task Force has been successful in functioning in a cost-effective, flexible and relatively non-bureaucratic manner, with light secretariat support, by joining hands with a large number of interested partners in undertaking its activities.

80. Nevertheless, the impact and sustainability of the Task Force's initiatives and activities were, at times, constrained by several features of its make-up, procedures and practices, including its fixed, limited membership; inadequate representation and contribution by various stakeholder groups, including academia, women, youth, the disabled and others; lack of clarity in the division of responsibilities among different components of the Task Force (e.g. bureau, members, networks); absence of clear policies on members' responsibilities and differing expectations on levels of engagement; absence of uniform policies on the formation of partnerships; limited resources and narrow funding base; and lack of measurable objectives and regular evaluation.

81. Despite its limitations, the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force proved the value of collaboration and cooperation.

82. Consultations conducted by the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force revealed support for a follow-up, based on a broader multi-stakeholder platform with no operational functions that would build on the achievements and correct its shortcomings, capitalize on opportunities to advance the United Nations development agenda that have been presented by the conjunction of the 2005 World Summit and the World Summit on the Information Society and strengthen the multi-stakeholder approach to international policy formulation.

83. The wheels for such a follow-up are now turning. The launch of the global alliance for information and communication technologies and development was recently approved by the Secretary-General. The alliance will hold its inaugural meeting on 19 June in Kuala Lumpur, hosted by the Government of Malaysia. The alliance's mission will be to facilitate and promote integration of ICT with development activities and to be a platform for an open, inclusive, multi-stakeholder, cross-sectoral policy dialogue on the issues. It will thus contribute to linking the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society with the broader United Nations development agenda. The alliance is intended to complement and support the existing institutions and networks, functioning as a multi-stakeholder platform independent of specific United Nations processes, including the World Summit on the Information Society, while at the same time maintaining a link to the United Nations under the patronage of the Secretary-General and the auspices of the Economic and Social Council. The alliance will build on, and advance, the work of past initiatives, such as the Digital Opportunity Task Force and the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force, and the experience of the World Summit on the Information Society process.

84. Having been formed on the basis of the outcome of the extensive multi-stakeholder consultations conducted by the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force, the global alliance will function primarily as a decentralized network, open to participation of all stakeholders, including Governments, business, civil society and international organizations. The alliance will aim to expand the circle of participants in policy debate and partnership beyond the traditional set of stakeholders by actively engaging constituencies that currently are not adequately involved, particularly non-governmental participants from developing countries, media, academia, youth and women's groups.

85. The alliance will organize thematic events, addressing core issues related to the role of ICT in economic development and the eradication of poverty, employment and enterprise in pro-poor growth scenarios, with particular focus on health, education, gender, youth, the disabled and disadvantaged segments of society. Groups of participants would coalesce around specific topics of mutual interest put forward for discussion.

VI. Conclusion

86. After the World Summit on the Information Society, a new stage of activity in Information Communication Technologies for Development is beginning. Indeed, there is discernible movement towards a convergence with so-called mainstream development, as it becomes evident that many of the internationally agreed development goals will not be met without a massive scaling-up of efforts. With its multiplier effects, ICT holds much untapped potential that can be leveraged. However, computer and telephone networks alone are not sufficient to attain the Millennium Development Goals by 2015; that will require the deployment of human networks as well.

87. It is not a challenge that Governments can overcome alone; the private sector and civil society bring unique assets to the table. Intergovernmental organizations, such as the United Nations, catalyse innovation, both by providing forums and frameworks within which these parties can work together to achieve common visions and by synthesizing best practices and lessons learned, using the knowledge of the larger system.

88. It is necessary to maintain the momentum generated within the development community in 2005 and broaden efforts to raise awareness, educate, build capacity and generate sustainable full-scale action not only to ensure that all the world's people have access to a telephone or the Internet but also to ensure that they, and succeeding generations, live healthier, better, more fulfilling lives.

Notes

[1] This section draws upon the research and conclusions included in Information and Communications for Development 2006: Global Trends and Policies, World Bank. Washington D.C., 2006, as well as contributions by Tadao Takahashi (Brazil), member of the Bureau of the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force.

[2] WSIS-05/TUNIS/DOC/6(Rev.1), para. 88.

[3] http://www.unicttf.org/perl/documents.pl?id=1525.

[4] http://www.unicttf.org/perl/documents.pl?id=1570.

[5] http://www.unicttf.org/perl/showdoc.pl?area=8tf.

[6] http://www.unicttf.org/perl/showdoc.pl?area=9tf.

[7] http://www.unicttf.org/perl/showdoc.pl?area=ms5.

[8] http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/UN/UNPAN021532.pdf.

[9] http://www.gesci.org/gesci/publisher/index.jsp?alID=89&nlID=116&plD=97.

[10] http://www.unicttf.org/perl/documents.pl?id=1544.

[11] http://www.unicttf.org/perl/documents.pl?id=1545.

[12] http://www.unicttf.org/perl/documents.pl?id=1571.

[13] http://www.unicttf.org/perl/documents.pl?id=1572.

[14] http://www.w2i.org/publications/PoBBWC05/index.html.

[15] http://www.openaccess.uem.mz.

[16] *Open Access for Africa: Challenges, Recommendations and Examples* (United Nations publication, Sales No. 05.II.A.14).

[17] http://www.unicttf.org/perl/documents.pl?id=1536.

[18] http://www.unpan.org/directory/conference/guest/browseoneconference.asp?conference_id=1837.